



## **Claims Conference Holocaust Survivor Memoir Collection**

Access to the print and/or digital copies of memoirs in this collection is made possible by USHMM on behalf of, and with the support of, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Library respects the copyright and intellectual property rights associated with the materials in its collection. The Library holds the rights and permissions to put this material online. If you hold an active copyright to this work and would like to have your materials removed from the web please contact the USHMM Library by phone at 202-479-9717, or by email at [digital\\_library@ushmm.org](mailto:digital_library@ushmm.org).





## **Anneta's Story**

Although my family have heard my story several times over the years, my daughters have asked me if they can write a book about my experiences during the war. I thought about it, and agreed to comply, but not because I am, by any means, a special or an extraordinary person. In fact, not even because my story is more compelling or deserves more attention than all the other stories. I am an average ordinary woman that has had to live under unordinary circumstances, which unfortunately, were beyond my control.

One of the reasons that I have agreed to publicize my experiences, is because maybe it will give another perspective to a historical account which, I believe it is a message of interest and of great importance to what happened during World War II. Maybe in telling my story it will give my life another perspective and hopefully, it will give my family an insight to their grandmother Anneta's feelings, which perhaps will influence them beyond their immediate surroundings as they build their future. It is true that certain situations that we encounter are not always changeable, but our feelings are. The past is their legacy, and what a great opportunity I am being given, by my daughters to put my thoughts on paper and communicate my story and my sentiments.







Where shall I begin? How can I describe my emotions during so many difficult moments, the times filled with so much fear, so much hopelessness, anguish, pain, and the desperation that makes you willing to die. And what about the feeling that goes into the deepest part of your soul digging for courage because you want to live. You start to think, what gain will your death bring? What about that encouraging voice inside that gives you the fortitude to find a way to survive and even to triumph. The truth is that everything is hard and yet, we strive to be the best that we can be, because no matter how difficult things are, life is still worth living. The human spirit was made to be resilient, and besides, what is the alternative. When I look back, I feel that my life has been a full one. It has been a life full of struggle, challenges, and situations that have been extremely difficult to overcome, but at the same time it has been a life full of many happy memories. My memories are full of kindness from people, of heroism, success, and of triumph. When I think of these times, my heart swells with enthusiasm and energy. I feel victorious and strong. Telling my story brings me gladness in my heart, which relinquishes all that I have suffered years ago.

Almost sixty- three years have passed since the war, and I still have those visions. I still remember everything so vividly. Today, I have a wonderful family. I have two great daughters, Julie and Lena, two son-in-laws, Albert and Gary, four grandchildren, Suzanne, who is married to Ian, Sol, who is married to Carmen, Jonathan, Albert, and one great grand daughter, Julie, or as we call her, little Julie. She is Suzanne's and Ian's daughter. We all live in the New York, New Jersey area, and it is my greatest joy to spend time with my family. My husband, Alberto passed away almost eleven years ago,







and although I miss him so much, I am sadder for him, because he really loved life.

There were many more things that he wanted to do, which he didn't.

Okay, they want to hear my story, so I will tell it. I feel very excited to talk about my voyage through life. I suppose to make things simple, I will start at the beginning.

My name is Anneta Yaffe. I was born in the small city of Veria, Greece on October 10, 1927. I grew up in a large and very close loving family, from which I have the fondest and most happy memories. We were nine people. My mother, Vida, five brothers and three sisters. My father Sabati Mordohi died when I was a very young child, and therefore, I do not remember that much about him. I do remember that he was a fantastic storyteller and we all used to very eagerly sit around him to hear him tell us stories. In fact, all the neighborhood children used to come over our house to hear his stories. In age order, we were: Mentesh 28, Riketa 26, Ruben 23, Ida 19, Jackos 17, Alberto 15, myself 13, and Isaack 9. Mentesh was married to a woman named Rachel. They had two boys, Sabi and Abraham. My sister Riketa was also married. Her husband's name was to Joseph Strumsa. They had three children. Lena, Julica and Jacob. My sister Ida was newly married to Isaack Alvo. All of them lived very close to us. We were all brought up speaking two languages. The first one was Ladino, a Judeo Spanish mixture, and Greek. Ladino is the Spanish of Cervantes with Turkish, Arabic and Greek accents. Ladino was and is the language spoken by Sephardic Jews. The Sephardic Jews left Spain when in 1492, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella proclaimed the expulsion of the Jews of Spain. In short, when Spain expelled its Jews, the Ottoman Empire welcomed







them. This resulted that most Sephardic Jews that lived in Greece and were from the former territories of the Ottoman Empire, spoke Turkish. In fact, some never learned Greek. This was the case of my mother. She spoke Ladino and Turkish.

We lived in Veria in a two-story house. There was one big bedroom upstairs, a large room divided into a living and dining room combination, a kitchen and bathroom. The downstairs consisted of a laundry room and another small room. We were all born and raised in this house. I have very warm and pleasant memories of my life with my family in this house. I remember that our house was full of love, joy, friends, and lots of curiosity.

All of us slept in one room on mattresses on the floor. Until my sister Ida got married, we shared one mattress, and the younger children shared the other mattresses. We had two beds. My mother slept in one, and my older brother Ruben, slept on the other. This worked out fine, especially in the winter because as we only had one wood burning stove and we all kept warm. In the summer, some of us slept in the kitchen, or in the living room. The downstairs area was used more as a storage space. Although there was another room, we did not sleep there. Not even in the summer. There was also another room, but it was outside the house. I believe that my mother rented this room out for extra income, as we really needed money, especially since my father died. We all ate in the living room/dining room. This area was more a dinning room rather than a living room. There were no sofas there. There was a very large round mahogany table in the middle. If we used the leaves, over fifteen or sixteen people were able to sit comfortably.







The furniture also included a beautiful breakfront. We sat around the room in chairs, as there was no sofa. We always had lots of company. There was always some kind of social activity going on at our house, as we were so many children, and all of us had lots of friends.

Our life, was pretty simple, or it seemed that way to me. When we got up in the morning, all of us would have our breakfast before we went to school. We would eat whatever there was. We did not have very fancy meals, but there was always something good and wholesome to eat. We would always have coffee with milk and I remember there was always rice pudding. My mother would give each one of us a small plate of bread or a biscuit to eat, and we would be off to school. We attended the Jewish School, but the curriculum included both, Hebrew and Greek studies. We would always come home for lunch and eat bread and cheese, or a nice meal that my mother had cooked. I remember that there were always lots of fruits in the house, and I specifically remember that we ate a lot of romaine lettuce, especially while we were playing outside.

Our house was located right in the middle of the Jewish neighborhood which was located near the River Tripotamo in the East side of the city. The area is called Barbota.

Basically only Jews lived there. We were approximately 850 people in the neighborhood. Our homes were located in a sort of circular shape overlooking a garden, which was in the middle. Each house was next to each other. The synagogue was right in the middle of the neighborhood. Our living room windows overlooked the Synagogue. There were two Jewish grocery stores for every day groceries. One of them belonged to my sister and her husband. For the big shopping, you had to go to the market place. The







men did the big food shopping. That was the custom. The women would only go to buy clothing, and items for the house, such as sheets, towels, etc. All social activities took place in our neighborhood, especially, in the garden. We would celebrate Jewish holidays there, have dances, the children would play, and the adults would just sit there and discuss life day after day. Today, this area is a museum.

For Greece, the Second World War started in October, 1940. It began when Italy invaded Albania, while at the same time they decided to invade Greece as well. The Italians warned the Greek dictator, Ioannis Metaxas that they were coming to invade Greece. Metaxas immediately replied "NO" and ordered the Greek army to go to Albania and stop the invasion. I remember going around the neighborhood to see all the men getting ready to go to the army. I was a very curious girl. I used to love to go and watch how everyone said goodbye to their families and just watch and see what their reaction was. I wanted to see who was crying, yelling and carrying on. I was very interested in peoples' emotions. My brothers did not go to the army because my father died and they had to support the family. They were, however, recruited by the government to serve in the helper category. During this year, all the school girls, as part of the school curriculum, had to spend time knitting woolen socks and gloves for the Greek soldiers who were fighting the Italians in Albania. It was an exceptionally cold winter with very low temperatures and lots of snow. Italy thought that this would be a simple victory. To the Italians' surprise, it was quite the opposite. The combination of the severe cold and snow and the strong Greek army, made Italy to withdraw by March 1941.







The happy victorious momentum did not last long. One month later, on April, 1941, the Germans invaded Greece and the occupation began. The Greek army was tired and felt that they had no chance of resisting the strong German army. Metaxa, therefore, did not really resist the German army. Germany and her allies Italy, and Bulgaria took over Greece without any difficulty in 1941. Italy's glory did not last too long. In 1943, they surrendered to the Allied forces when they invaded Italy. The Germans were outraged and considered this as a betrayal to them. Thus, they immediately began arresting and killing many of the Italians that were in Greece. During this period, there was a lot of hunger in Greece. Especially in Thessaloniki. In the winter of 1941/42, the Bulgarians expelled many Greeks living in the Bulgarian territory. All of these people were leaving Bulgaria and coming to Thessaloniki and Athens. This caused severe shortages of food. The people were suffering of starvation and Typhus.

In Veria, we did not experience a serious lack of food. First of all, Veria's fertile soil produces a generous amount of grain, vegetables, fruits corn etc. In our particular case, my brothers had their own business, which was making leashes and straps for farm animals, such as horses, mules, and oxen. They sold their merchandise not only for money, but also for food items from the farmers; therefore, we always had food in our house. My mother always had plenty of flour in stock to bake bread. We were able to eat meat once a week, chicken once a week, and always had lots of vegetables. In fact, every Friday, my mother would cook a huge pot of beans and another pot of rice and would feed the hungry people that would come from Thessaloniki. These were both Jews and Gentiles. Soon the word got around that they could find food in my house and a lot







of people would come and eat. My brothers would place the heavy pots outside our front door. Each person would bring a dish and my mother would scoop some rice and beans into each person's plate. There was a deep depression going on in Greece. People were selling their homes, furniture and anything they had in order to eat.

Beginning in 1941, everything changed. Our lives changed drastically. Life as we knew it would never be the same again. In 1941, there were approximately 80,000 Jews living in Greece. After the Germans invaded Greece, they divided the country into three zones. The German zone, which consisted of Western Macedonia, Thessaloniki, the Aegean Islands and Crete. Veria was in the German zone. The Bulgarian zone, which consisted of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, and the Italian zone, which consisted of the Dodecanese and the Ionian Islands as well as Peloponnese in the mainland. The Germans, however, had the right to intervene in any zone at any time. The Germans were thorough and efficient in carrying their plans to exterminate the entire Greek Jewry.

The largest Jewish community, by far, was in Thessaloniki. There were approximately 50,000 Jews living in this city. Of these, only approximately 2000 people came back after the war. Within three months, approximately 48,000 Jews went to Auschwitz by freight cars. Each convoy was made up of a couple of thousand, and they would leave on a daily basis. In this number there were approximately 650 Jews from Veria. In March 1943, the Jews from the Bulgarian zone were deported, mainly to Transilvania. Approximately 4000 Jews were handed over to the Germans to be transported. Of these,







approximately 200 came back. In March 1944, the 12,500 Jews from the Italian zone were deported. In total, approximately 65,000 or approximately 86% of the Greek Jews were killed. At the end of the war, there were approximately 8,000 Jews in Greece. No Jew from Veria came back alive from the camps. I found out later that in May, 1943 approximately 660 Jews from Veria were seized and isolated, I believe in the synagogue during the Passover services. A couple of days later, they were shipped, along with Jews from Thessaloniki to Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen and Tremblica. Among these Jew from Verria, was my beloved family. My entire family! Approximately 150 people were able to escape. These were the ones that survived as a result of running away and hiding in the mountains. We are part of this group.

My first memory of the arrival of the Germans is that I again used to run around the neighborhood trying to see what was going on. My mother would yell at me saying that I was now a young lady of 14, and that I should stay home as it had now become very dangerous and someone might try to harm me. My mother's yelling, however, would not stop me. I would get together with my friends and go on our mission, that is, finding out what was going on in the neighborhood. Every Sunday, I would go out with my friends and go to the market place. My brothers would give me five drachmas a week and I would go with my friends to the sweet shop to buy my weekly dessert, which was a rich chocolate pastry. This cost 2.5 Drachmas. I used to look forward to this all week long. It was my greatest pleasure, and nothing would stop me.







Once the German occupation began, the first Jewish community in Greece to experience discriminatory measures was in Thessaloniki. Thessaloniki was occupied in April, 1941. Soon after, the robberies, brutalities and murders began. One of the first actions that the Germans took, was to arrest the entire council of the Jewish community, and to replace its members by new members. By June, they began to confiscate the rabbinical school, private libraries, manuscripts and pieces of liturgical art which was priceless. These were shipped to, I believe, Frankfurt Germany. They also destroyed the Jews' businesses. The Germans arrested Rabbi Koretz of Thessaloniki in April and sent him to Vienna. For some reason though, they brought him back in the winter of 1941, and reinstated him as chief rabbi. The news spread fast. We began to hear about all the places that the Germans sent the Jews to, like Poland. The Germans were rounding up Jews everywhere. They did not start their brutalities in Veria until 1943, however, in 1942, they imposed on us to wear the yellow stars. When we took off our coats, the star of David had to be seen on our blouses and jackets. In addition, we had to adhere to a very strict curfew. We had to be out of the street and into our homes by 7:00 P.M. Also, all Jewish businesses were boycotted. The Germans posted signs at every door, which prohibited anyone to patronize Jewish stores. The doors of our homes were also marked by the star of David. Also in 1942, in Thessaloniki, all Jewish males between 18 to 45 years old were ordered to assemble in the main square. They were humiliated by the Germans. They were forced to do gymnastics in the very hot and humid weather while the Germans hosed them down. During this year, my sister Ida got married. I was now the only girl left in the house, and my mother and brothers warned me very seriously, that now I had to stay at home.







During this time, my brother Ruben, became friends with Alberto Yaffe. Alberto's family had moved to Veria from Kavala. They left Kavala because the Bulgarians had occupied the city, and were handing over the entire Jewish community to the Germans. The Yaffe's first went to Thessaloniki, but seeing the hunger that was taking place there, they came to Veria and opened a textile store. This was late 1942. The store was close to my brothers' shop, so Ruben and Alberto became good friends. Ruben invited Alberto to our house several times. After a few visits to our home, Alberto told Ruben, that he had fallen in love with me and that he wanted to marry me. Ruben, very surprised. He also explained to Alberto that I was still very young and not ready for marriage. Alberto was 18 years old and I was 15. Alberto had lied about his age to Ruben. He told him that he was 22. I found out Alberto's real age later on.

Ruben immediately told my mother Alberto's intentions, and my mother explained to my brother that I was much too young to be considered for marriage. In addition to my age, my mother had another problem. She did not have a dowry to give me, which was the custom in those days. My sister, Ida, had gotten married six months before, and my mother had not had enough time to start a dowry for me. Alberto's family was in a much better financial position than my family. They also considered themselves higher class, as their business was white collar compared to ours. Although they had more money than we did, they lived very, very modestly. In fact, they lived in one room, and shared a house with another family. Their store however was very impressive. It was full of the







best merchandise. In Kavala, they owned a house, and also had a house in a village outside of Kavala, called Nikisani. The family lived there for many years.

Alberto insisted on speaking with my mother, and asked Ruben to make an appointment for him with her. My mother agreed, and Alberto showed up at my house to speak with her. The first thing Alberto told my mother was that he loved me very much and that she did not have to worry about the dowry. He said that he would provide it. My mother insisted that I was really too young for marriage. Alberto, however, immediately began bringing various items from his father's store, to my house to go towards putting together a dowry, without telling his parents. A dowry in those days in Greece, consisted of everything that is needed to start a home. Linens, dishes, etc. In addition, a dowry also included some money. Usually, enough money to help to start a business. Parents used to worry when they had a girl. Alberto kept this up. Bringing merchandise from the store, and constantly speaking with Ruben and my mother. He just would not give up. A few months passed, and after many, many conversations, with my mother, she finally agreed to the marriage. When I was told, I began to cry. First of all, I did not want to get married. Second, I did I know Alberto enough to love him. I also did not like the way he looked. I thought that he looked too much like a country boy. Although Alberto was born in Thessaloniki, he was raised in Nikisani, which was just a small village, and Kavala, which was a little bigger than Nikisani, but still a village. His family lived there for many years. The reason they even left Kavala was because, the Bulgarians invaded the place. I was so upset regarding this marriage, but it seemed that I had no choice. Soon, our engagement was announced.







A few weeks later, Alberto's store was robbed. The thieves stole most of the merchandise. His parents were beside themselves. Their entire stock was gone, and it would be very hard to replace. Alberto, now fearing that his family might not be so comfortable, and that my mother might reject him, he informed my mother that the wedding had to be moved ahead, and that he would inform his parents away of the marriage taking place a lot sooner. Alberto never spoke to me about any of this, or for that matter about anything. All I was doing during this time, was crying and saying that I did not want to get married. My family, however, were in agreement that I should marry Alberto. My mother saw Alberto's persistence as evidence of his love for me, and also that his family was very comfortable and felt that I would have a good life with a husband that would love me and take care of me very well forever. The only one that was on my side was my brother, Alberto. He agreed with me, that I was too young, and that I should get married whenever I wanted and with whom I wanted.

When Alberto announced to his parents that he wanted to get married a lot sooner than planned, his father, Samuel, said that the timing was totally wrong. First, the robbery had just taken place and they were very preoccupied with this. In addition a lot was going on with the German occupation. The timing was just not good. Alberto, their only son, started begging his father and said that he absolutely could not live without me. Samuel didn't know how to handle the situation so he made a deal with Alberto. He told Alberto that he wanted see if I was really a girl that would bring luck. If I brought good luck to the family, then the thieves would get caught and they would recover all the merchandise







that was stolen. If that happened, he would give his blessing. If I was not lucky, then the thieves would not get caught, and the marriage would not take place.

While all these conversations were taken place, Alberto and Ruben were picked up by the police for questioning on suspicion that they might have something to do with the robbery. The reason they gave was that it was because of me. It made sense to them, that Alberto and Ruben stole all the merchandise to go towards my dowry. But while they were under questioning, the thieves were caught. The merchandise, however was destroyed. The thieves had thrown all the textiles etc, in the river, and they were all ruined. So Samuel, under pressure from Alberto, gave his permission for the marriage to take place. We got engaged right away, and agreed that the two families would get together for dinner in three days to celebrate. The dinner never took place.

Before the three days passed, my sister's husband, Isaac informed us that the Germans were going to begin to round up the Jews in Veria within the next forty-eight hours. He also informed us that he was taking Ida and going into hiding with his parents. Samuel and Joyia, (Alberto's mother) had also made arrangements to escape. They left directly from the store into hiding, in a Greek house. Alberto was supposed to go with them, but refused to go without me. Alberto, rushed to my house, and asked my mother's permission to take me with him in to hiding to join his family. My mother refused.

Alberto, desperate went to his father and told him that he would not go unless I came with him. He explained that my mother had refused to let me go. Samuel came out of hiding and came to my mother begging her to let me go with them. My mother replied







that if they wanted to take me, Alberto would have to marry me first. Samuel kept insisting that we were just too young. My mother insisted, that under no condition would she let her daughter go without marriage. Samuel began pleading with my mother and told her that she had many children and that he only had one child who refused to go with them, and that he could not bear losing his only child. My mother insisted that it did not matter how many children she had. It is the same thing as the fingers in your hands. No matter how many fingers you have, if you cut one off, it will bleed the same. After lots of conversation, my mother won.

The wedding took place on Friday. I do not remember the exact date, but it was in 1943, right before Purim, therefore it must have been in March. It was the middle of the day. The rabbi came and the wedding took place in my home. I did not get dressed in a wedding dress. This was just two days before the Germans were to surround the Jewish neighborhood in Veria. After the wedding, my in-laws left and Alberto and I stayed in Veria overnight. The plan was that the horses and wagon were to come on Saturday and pick us up and take us into hiding. That same night, my brother-in-law Isaac gave us the news that the Germans were already very near the Jewish neighborhood, and that they would be surrounding us at any moment. Alberto immediately wanted us to leave to join his parents. I began to cry to my mother. My mother told me that I was now a married woman, and that I had to go with my husband. I was crying so hard, that in order to calm me down, she asked me if I wanted my brother Ruben to come with us, and if that would make me feel better. I felt that I had no choice but to agree. My mother hugged me and I hugged her back with all my heart. She then took out the family's beautiful pearl







necklace and she gently placed it around my neck. I looked at her with tears running down my face and the three of us left.

The Jews truly believed that the Germans were taking them to work in Germany, and that they would come back after a short time. They packed their bags and prepared for the trip. My mother even prepared some toasted bread and some other food for the trip. My brothers packed their tools for the trip so that they could work when they got to Germany. Every Jew believed this story. One of the reasons, I think, that contributed to such an easy capturing and transport of the Jews, was that Rabbi Koretz from Thessaloniki gave a speech saying that if anyone tried to escape, their whole family would be killed. The Jewish community of Veria had very close ties with the one in Thessaloniki, and Koretz had a lot of influence in Veria. So the families stayed together out of fear. This false understanding made it very easy for the Germans to achieve their goal. Everyone chose to stay with their families rather than run for survival. The only way a family member could separate and go their own way, would be if they were married. The Greek government tried to stop the Germans from taking the Jews, but they were not successful. The head of the Greek Orthodox Church, Archbishop Damaskinos together with various intellectuals and political groups, officially appealed and protested to the German government in Greece by writing a letter protesting against the persecution of the Greek Jews. They made the case that the Jews were Greeks also. The Jews had just fought in Albania along side their fellow Greeks. In fact 500 Greek Jewish soldiers had died along with approximately 1500 wounded. They made a good case, but to no avail. Many Greek citizens showed their opposition, which threatened their own life, but again, to no avail.







There were also other actions that Greeks took to save the Jews from the Germans. In Athens, the police issued false identification cards to Jews showing that they were Greek Orthodox.

Night time came and Ruben, Alberto and I left as planned. This was Saturday. Alberto was taking us to meet his parents who were already in hiding in a Greek home in the near mountains. The problem was that the German bases were exactly in the direction that we were heading. I stopped them in the middle of the way to tell them this, and furthermore, the yellow stars were obvious on our coats. This would be suicide. In the meantime, we heard voices. We looked back and saw a couple of German soldiers heading our way. Somehow, they did not notice our yellow stars, and just saw a girl and two men. They were quite drunk and just having a good time. They began to laugh at us and gave us gentle slap with their whip, and went on their way.

We were really in a very difficult situation. We could not turn back, and we could not continue on this road, as we were heading right towards the German bases. I remembered that a Greek woman who was a friend of our family, lived near by. We decided to go there. When we got to her house, we began banging on the door, but as it was in the middle of the night, no one was answering. We did not know what to do. There was nowhere to go. There was no turning back now. My very good Greek friend, Olga, lived near by, and I told Ruben and Alberto, that we had no choice but to go to Olga's house. On the way there, we met with some Greek men coming out of the prostitutes' house. They were very drunk. We got scared that they would follow us, and tried to take







another road. However, they did see us and began following us. They were dressed in German uniforms, and they did notice our yellow stars. They began yelling "JEWS, JEWS STOP." First they screamed this out in German to really scare us. However, Ruben and Alberto recognized them as two guys from the market place and began speaking to them in Greek. They then began speaking to them in Greek also, and warned us that they would give us up to the Germans because we were breaking the curfew.

We began running, and they ran after us. We took the road that went around Olga's house rather than directly the road to her house, because we did not want them to know our destination. We did not want to get Olga's family into trouble. We discussed the situation while running, and decided that I would go ahead to Olga's, and they would stay behind to deal with the three Greeks. And so, I ran and Alberto and Ruben slowed down. The Greeks caught up with them. Alberto and Ruben began fighting with the Greeks as they began accusing us of being Jews and breaking the rules. By now it was midnight. I got to Olga's house and began knocking on the door. No one answered. I called her name, and was begging her to open the door. After awhile, she heard me and understood that I was in great trouble, and opened the door. I quickly explained what was going on, and explained that Alberto and Ruben were fighting with the three Greeks. In the meantime, Olga's father, Mr. Yiannis came to the door and after listening to my story, he really got scared. He told me that if he helped us, his family would be in a lot of trouble for helping Jews. Olga began to argue with her father and told him that they could not just leave us there, and that if her father did not help us, she would go with me. Her father finally agreed to help and asked me to come into the house.







Once I was in the house, Mr. Yiannis instructed all the women, (his wife, Olga and I) to go into the next room. He asked his wife before she went into the room, to quickly prepare some food and to place it on the table. He also instructed her to place a bottle of Ouzo on the table as well. He instructed us not to come out under any circumstances. Mr. Yiannis, had a plan. His plan was to go to the creek, which is where the Greeks and Alberto and Ruben were, and invite all of them to eat and to drink to his house. He would tell them that it was his birthday and he wanted to celebrate.

Mr. Yiannis left the house and began walking towards the creek.. When he got there, he found all of them fighting. He told them that life was too short to spend it fighting over nothing, and that there were better ways to pass time. He told them that they should come to his house and eat, drink and celebrate. Mr. Yiannis did not have to do much convincing. The Greeks agreed right away. They really were looking to drink more and have a good time. They all came back to the house, and sat around the table and they ate and drank. We could hear them getting even more drunk from the next room. They sat around for a couple of hours. When they finished, and were ready to leave, they warned Mr. Yiannis that he better get rid of the Jews as soon as possible, or else he and his family would be in great trouble. They warned him that he would go to prison or worse. The Germans would really kill them all. Mr. Yiannis agreed with them, and promised that he would get rid of the Jews right immediately.







As soon as they left, Mr. Yiannis asked us to leave. Olga began to cry again and begged her father not to turn us away in the middle of the night with nowhere to go, and under such dangerous conditions. She told him to hide us in the house for at least until morning came. Mr. Yiannis thought about it, and agreed to help us. He began to look around to find a place to hide us. His eyes went to the couch. There was some storage underneath the couch. This storage was used for wood in the winter time. As the weather was warm, the storage space was empty, and all three of us went in there to hide. I remember the space was so small, for three people. We went in and were on top of one another. We could hardly breath. We spent the rest of the night there. When morning came and it was time to leave, we asked Mr. Yiannis to guide us to where my in-laws were hiding, in the mountains. He agreed to take us. He said that he knew another road to get there, without using the main road and attracting attention. The road he took us through was cutting through different farms. He also knew the people that were hiding my in-laws. Before we left however, Ruben asked Mr. Yiannis to please go back and take a walk through the Jewish neighborhood to see if the Germans had surrounded the area as they had planned. Mr. Yiannis thought that this was a good idea, and he agreed to go. A little while later he came back and reported that the Germans had not surrounded the neighborhood yet. He said that everything looked normal. When Ruben heard this, he decided to go back to our home. Alberto pleaded with him not to go back, as it was not safe. Ruben insisted that nothing was going to happen. I wanted to cry, to scream again for Ruben to stay with me, but I felt embarrassed. I was now a married woman and had to act mature. I should have cried! I should have screamed! I should have begged! I should have clung my







arms around his neck and not let my brother go. But I did not do any of these things, and he went back. I NEVER SAW MY BROTHER RUBEN AGAIN.

As soon as Ruben went, we left the house. Mr. Yinannis, brought Alberto and I to the house where my in-laws were hiding. When we arrived at the hiding place, and were ready to say good buy to Mr. Yiannis, Alberto gave him the key to his store and told him to go and get whatever he wanted. It was Alberto's way of thanking him. Alberto and I stayed with my in-laws at this house for 3 days. After the three days, the Greeks that we were staying with, said that we were not safe there anymore, and took us to hide further into the mountains. We had to pass through a small river. The minute we crossed the river, we heard the Germans shooting. We ran and hid in the mountains. This river separated the Veria area from the various mountain villages.

At this time, my father-in-law, Samuel, was 65 years old and my mother- in-law, Joyia, was 55. Our trip to the upper mountains was made via donkey. Joyia was riding the donkey with all the things that we were carrying, and the rest of us were on foot. Every so often we would meet with other people along the way to take us to the new hiding place. All these arrangements had been made by Samuel a long time in advance. He had paid a lot of money. We finally arrived at the new hiding place, and met with the people that were waiting for us. They immediately dressed us up like the local village people. The women with long skirts and scarves. The men, with coulot pants, and caps on their heads. We now settled in our new hide out. Whenever the Germans would come to the village, the town people would warn us. Alberto and Samuel would hide further into the







trees, and Joyia and I would mingle with the women. Some of the village people knew that we were Jewish, and began saying that they were scared to keep our secret any longer, and that we had to leave. The Germans were visiting the village quite often now and everyone was really becoming very frightened. Because of this fear, the owner of the house asked us to leave. This time, they took us to a very remote place to hide. There was literally nothing there. They put a shack together with branches and leaves, and told us not to leave the area at all. We were instructed to keep a fire burning at all times, in order to keep the animals away, and especially wolves.

The name of this remote place is Kokova. The whole area is called Pieria. We had a fire burning all the time. The hut was extremely small, and the four of us slept together. The hut really looked like a Suckus house. The villagers came every day and brought us food and we would pay them. Samuel, however, began sensing that something was wrong.

We found out later that the villagers intended to kill us and take all our things and all our money. In addition to money, we had with us textiles, scarves and thing of this nature from the store. We soon realized that the reason we were taken to such a remote place was so that we would be totally isolated and helpless. This place had no sign of life.

Neither other villagers nor the Germans had any way of getting there, which ofcourse was a good thing. We stayed there for about a month. Life was so difficult there. It was so lonely. Alberto and I would take long walks in to the woods to have some privacy, away from his parents. I was so lonely and so depressed. I missed my family so much. I felt like I was living with strangers. Even Alberto, who was my husband, I did not know and could not share my feelings with . I was crying all the time, I could not eat nor sleep







well, and just felt very depressed. Sometimes, I wished the Germans would capture me and kill me. I just wanted to end this life. I could not bear to live anymore.

My saddest memory in this remote place is that I lost something priceless there. I lost the four strands of good cultured pearls that my mother had given me before I left my home. They were so emotionally valuable to me. My father had given these pearls to my mother as a gift when they got married. There were originally 12 strands. As each child got married, my mother would give them one strand. Also each grandchild would receive one strand. She only had four strands left by the time I got married, and she gave them all to me. It was the only souvenir I had from my mother. I lost these pearls in these mountains. This really hurt me so much. I cried so hard with all my heart. I used to wear them constantly, because I wanted to feel my mother was with me. It gave me some solace. I was a stupid girl, wearing them in the mountains and running all over the place. But it was the only comfort that I had, the memory of my mother. During our stay there, I also developed an unusual skin disease. My whole face got filled with pimples filled with puss. Every part of my skin was covered with them. Every inch of it. The only part you could see on my face and neck were my eyes. None of us knew what to do. I felt so terrible because the pimples really hurt, not to mention that I looked pretty awful.

Our suspicions regarding the intentions of the villagers were growing more every day. One day, Samuel decided that we had to leave this place as soon as possible. He did not like the way the people looked at us nor the way they treated us. They looked very dangerous, and we really began fearing them. And so the following day, before daylight,







we left. The four of us began walking. We wanted to leave before the villagers came that morning. After walking for hours, we finally arrived at a small village. Everyone began staring at me, and began commenting on how awful I looked. They were actually scared because they thought that I might have a contagious disease. They backed up away from me and just stared. Finally, a nice lady walked over to me, looked at me very carefully, and commented that we had to do something about my condition, because she said I would eventually choke, as the pimples were getting very thick around my neck and throat area.

We were really scared. How were we to find a doctor to take care of my condition without getting caught? We also felt that we looked Jewish. Then another lady came over to us and said that she could cure me. She said that she had the remedy and that if it was okay with us, she could cure me. We said that we were most appreciative. She went around to every man that was smoking a pipe, and gathered the ashes. She needed all the nicotine that she could find. She rubbed the nicotine together in her hands, and began applying it all over my face. I began to scream from pain. It was a burning pain that I was not able to endure, and I fainted. When I came to, she assured us that it was Okay, and confirmed that this would cure me. She said that I had to do this every night. Each night that I applied the nicotine, the pain got less and less. By the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> night, big pieces of scabs began falling from my face. I was so happy. However, now I had another problem. All these scabs had left very ugly scars. I looked awful. I would wash my face constantly thinking that they would go away. I do not know if it was the water







from the village, or time, but eventually, the scars began fading away, until they were all gone. Another problem that I developed was that I stopped menstruating.

As soon as we had arrived at this village, Alberto went to see the mayor, and explained that we were immigrants from Kavala, and were looking for a place to stay. We did not say that we were Jewish. He found a room for us in some ones house. This town is called Calivia Haradras. Our room was on the second floor. The landlord lived on the first floor. We had to tell the landlord, however, that we were Jewish, as we often forgot and spoke in Ladino. He was a very nice person. He assured us that we were safe there and that we should not worry. He was a Pondio from Russia and was very much aware of hoe bad it is to be discriminated against and he also knew what it was like to leave your home because he had suffered this experience himself. He understood our situation perfectly well. We stayed there for one year. Samuel would sell his textiles and various things that he had brought with him to buy our food and to pay our rent with. Samuel also had some money that he had hidden. The money was sawn in various places. Some money was sawn on the shoulder pads of his coat. Also he had some dollars sawn in a blanket. I believe that there was around US\$100 in the blanket. We also had Greek money of course, which was sawn around our waists, and always carried with us.

Again, life was very difficult there. We all slept in one room. We had to wash our clothes in the river, carry drinking water from the wells, as there was no running water inside the house. The water was so heavy to carry. I was not used to this life. I had to do all the chores because I was the daughter-in-law, and that was the custom. Joyia would







cook. I also had to clean, iron, etc. Even the village women felt sorry for me and used to give me a hand sometimes. They used to help me light the fire under the big caldera that we washed the clothes in. I had to gather wood, place it under the water, light the fire and wash the clothes. Being the youngest daughter in my house, I was not accustomed to this work. My hands were full of callouses and I was constantly exhausted.

The story we told everyone was that we were from Kavala. This village was very far from my home, Veria. This area is called Katerini. There, Alberto became friends with all the people. He played the bouzouki every night and would gather the people together. Alberto was very gifted. He could play music by ear. He could listen to a song and play it on the bouzouki or the mandolin seconds after hearing a song. When Alberto would play and sing, he held everyone in the palm of his hands. His eyes were full of feeling celebrating life. There was no trace of fear. With all that was going on around us, we were still able to steal an hour from our misery and sing and dance. The Germans would come to the village, take food and go. They never suspected that there were any Jews hiding there. Also the ANDARTES, the resistance fighters, used to come, take food and leave. The mayor of the town was a good politician who knew how to keep peace. When the Germans came, he was on their side. When the Andartes came, he was on their side. One day, other Jewish families arrived there to hide. They came from Katerini. The mayor also helped them. In Katerini, there was a German, who was an Evangelist, and who was a really kind person. He knew that the Germans would come to look for the Jews there, and he told them to go and hide. That is how these Jewish families came to Kalivia Haradras. We were now five families hiding. At first, we were the only one.







Joyia's brother, Jackos Raffael, also came to live in Katerini. That made it very pleasant, because we now had Alberto's cousins there. All of us lived in Kalivia Haradras for one year. The mayor was protecting us, and also the landlord of our house. The landlord's name was Mr. Savidis. He really was a wonderful man. Most of the people living in Katerine were Pondie. They came from PONDO, Russia. They were very good people. They really felt our agony and sorrow and helped us. The Pondie spoke a different language than Greek, and Alberto learned the language and he also learned their songs, and would entertained them. They really liked him and really appreciated him.

One day, Samuel got sick. There was no doctor in this village. The closest doctor was in Katerini. Joyia had a younger brother, Haim, who lived there. Haim was a Turkish citizen. He was also a very entertaining man who loved playing the Oud, a Turkish instrument. He was and was liked very much by the Greeks and had a lot of Greek friends. Haim was divorced but had a son. When Samuel got sick, we made the decision that the safest way to get him to the doctor in Katerini would be for me to take him because we believed that I would draw the least attention.

The arrangements were made. We left early one morning by horse and wagon for Katerini. I was dressed like a village girl for disguise. The trip took two hours. Haim was waiting for us, and immediately took us to stay with a friend of his, who was Greek. This friend had a son, who had a very big position with the Greek Government, he was a collaborator for the Germans. His son did not live there, however. This friend knew that







we were Jews, and told Haim not to worry. Being that the friend's son had such a big position and a good relationship with the Germans, the Germans never visited his house. This was a major favor to Haim. We settled in, and called the doctor, who diagnosed Samuel with double pneumonia. Samuel had a very high fever. The doctor said that we must stay there for at least five to seven days, because Samuel was too ill to travel. The doctor did not know that we were Jewish. We stayed there for eight days. Haim brought us food every day. At the end of the eight days, the doctor confirmed that Samuel was feeling well enough for us to leave the next day. We arranged for the horse and wagon to pick us up the following morning.

That same evening, we heard a very loud banging on the front door of the house. Three Greek collaborators dressed in German uniforms and one German officer barged in. They were looking for a man whose name was Tsanganikas, and who they claimed was a traitor. Tsanganikas was accused of while pretending to be on the German side, he was passing secrets to the Andartes. Someone had betrayed him, and they were going from house to house looking for him. The collaborators were screaming at everyone. They were asking questions, and were using terror tactics. They were pushing people, and handling them in a very barbaric way. We were in our room listening when suddenly, they kicked the door open, and barged into our room, and immediately demanded to see our papers.

We were terrified. Samuel had no papers with him. They had not paid attention to me yet. Samuel told them that he was very sick. The questions started. Samuel told them







that we were from Kalivia Haradra. One of the men began accusing Samuel that he knew the Andartes. Samuel began to plead with them and telling them that this was not the case. He was begging them to leave him alone. He explained why we were there, and that he was sick. They began accusing him of all sorts of crimes.. He was being screamed at and accused of bringing papers containing secret information from the Germans to give to the Andartes, and they began beating him, kicking him, and holding him by the back of his neck. The Greeks were doing the beatings. The German was just standing and observing.

This was going on for what seemed an eternity. Samuel was so scared. Finally about a half hour later, Samuel just cried out "I am Jewish, I do not know anything about what you are talking about. I am not an Andarte." Once he said this, they grabbed him and began dragging him out. At once, I got up and went to give him his coat and his shoes. Up to now, they had not paid attention to me. When they saw me taking care of him, they asked me what was my relationship to him. I said that he was my father. They asked me if I was also Jewish and I answered, Yes. I asked them if they wanted me to also go along with them. They said yes. Then they began to slap us and told us to hurry up. One of the men actually said that they should stop slapping me, as I was not resisting, but volunteering to go on my own. They dragged us out into the street. There were at least 10 men waiting outside, whom they had captured and had also accused of being traitors.







From 8:00 P.M. to 8:00 A.M., we were dragged from house to house as they were conducting their search. We waited outside of each house while they were searching inside. After each search, they would bring other people out of their homes. Altogether, they had gathered around 40 people. When the search was finished, they took us all to the head German in charge, and put us all in prison. The German officer at the prison asked Samuel and I, why two Jews, were there with the other people. He spoke to us through an interpreter. We told him the whole story. How we were hiding, the illness, etc. My story was that Samuel was my father. The reason was so that they would not ask any questions regarding where my husband was. I stated that I was living in the village with my father. They asked who we knew in this village, how did we come there, who made the arrangements, etc. We mentioned Haim and the friend whose house we stayed in. They immediately ordered that Haim and his friend be brought and be put in prison. We felt very badly that we told them about Haim and the friend, but the way that they were questioning us, we knew that they would find out everything very soon, and then they would punish all of us even worse, when they found out that we were lying. We also believed that as Haim was a Turkish citizen, they would not bother him. This is because Germany and Turkey were allies. It was a very difficult situation. Haim's friend was sure that his son would save him, and as it turned out, he did. He was in prison for only 24 hours. The Germans kept questioning us regarding the identity of the person that they were looking for, and we kept saying that we did not know him. After the questioning, they put us in prison. Now, we were all in prison. They put Haim and Samuel in the same prison cell, and they put me in another prison cell with other women.







They accused me that I was the fiancée of the man that they were looking for, Tsanganikas. Tsanganika's entire family was in prison. His two sisters were in my cell and his two brothers and their father were in the cell with the men. They had captured his entire family except for him. At this time, they began questioning all of us. They asked his two sisters if I was their brother's fiancée, and they answered that they did not even know me. The Germans began beating me and questioning me over and over. They kept asking who I was, and more questions, questions, and more questions. In the meantime, the search was going on for Tsanganikas. They finally caught him. He was brought to the prison and put in a cell by himself, and began torturing him. I will never forget the screams coming from this man as they tortured him all night long.

The following morning, two men came into the prison to see Tsanganika's sisters. These two men were on the German side and were very good friends of Tsanganikas and his family. One of them, Christothoros, who was a very powerful man, was staring at me, and one of the sisters asked him help me. Although Christothoros and the other man found out that Tsanganikas had betrayed the Germans, they were still friendly to Tsanganika's family. He promised them that he would help me. We stayed in this prison for one week. Everyday from my prison door window, I would see Samuel and Haim in their cell. They would come to the small window of their cell door and speak with me. I told them of this conversation with this Christothoros, and Haim said that he knew of him, and that if he said that he would help me, he would keep his promise. During our stay in prison, they would give us nothing to eat. The town people would bring us food. All these kind people were Pondie.







The orders came for us to be transported to Thessaloniki. Tsanganikas's father, his brothers, Samuel, Haim, myself and the others. The sisters were left behind in the prison. All in all, 14 people would go. Thirteen men and I. We headed for the train station, however, when we got there, we found out there was no train for Thessaloniki available that evening, so we were left at a police station near by to wait. We are still in Ekaterini. They put the men in a cell and left me in the reception area with a policeman to guard me.

It was around 12 midnight and while we were waiting to see what would happen next, the man that promised to help me, Christoforos, walked in. He told me that he would take care of me from this point on. He was drunk, it was very late and he scared me. I did not want to go with him. I had the terrible feeling that he just wanted to have fun with me. He pulled me very hard by my hand and I felt very scared. I was thinking hard to find a way of getting away from him. I finally asked him if he had the appropriate documents for my release. I do not know how I thought to ask this. He responded that he did not need any documents. He said that he had all the authority he needed and that he pulled a lot of weight there, and that all he had to do was to ask for my release. Everyone seemed scared of him because he did have a lot of pull with the Germans. At this time, I did not feel scared anymore. I felt very brave. I told him that without the papers I would not go with him. He was screaming at everyone. I begged the policeman not to let me go. I tried to reason with him that if he released me, he would get into trouble. I continued to explain that the next day the Germans would be there to look for me and if he did not have the papers of release with an official signature to show them, he







would really get into big trouble, as the orders were for 14 people to be transported and not for thirteen. The policeman thought about it, and sighed deeply. He said, half to himself, that he had a very bad dream the night before, and that it was now coming true. He really got nervous, and explained to Christothoro that he was not releasing me to him. The policeman then decided to call and to speak to his superior. When he got him on the phone and explained the situation, the superior instructed him not to release me to anyone without the proper authorization. He agreed that since Christothoro was drunk, and did not have the official documentation for my release, they could really get into a lot of trouble with the Germans.

The problem now was how to get rid of Christothoro. The policeman made up the story that he had to wait for his superior to arrive at the station in order for him to okay this release. He also told him that this would not happen before at least another hour, and that he should leave and return in one later. The policeman also instructed me, very sternly, to be friendly to Christothore, in order not to aggravate him, and thus make the situation even more dangerous. I then turned to Christothoro and asked him to please come back in one hour for me, and that I would go with him. He was satisfied with this and left. As soon as he left, the policeman locked me up in a prison cell. Christothoro never came back. He was so drunk, that he probably just passed out somewhere. I later found out that the Germans had executed him. They told him that any man that was capable of betraying his own country, would not hesitate to betray them.







The next day, they sent us to Thessaloniki. All 14 of us. Samuel and Haim and I were placed in a work camp in Thessaloniki. There were 1500 prisoners there. These were Greeks who were prisoner workers. Each morning the men would form two lines and the Germans would take attendance. Each man would answer, present. Then they would all leave together. The Germans were there with whips, and would occasionally whip someone if they felt like it without a specific reason. After the attendance was taken, they were dispatched to various jobs within the city under guard. These jobs were very physical kind of jobs, such as building roads and breaking and loading heavy rocks. Every night they would come back to camp to sleep. There were three Germans and 12 Greeks who were responsible for running the prison camp. The Germans would leave at night to sleep in their own camp near by, and the Greeks would stand guard. This prison camp was a converted school in the Ayia Sophia. Five women worked in the kitchen and cooked for the 1500 men. There were two meals served daily, breakfast and dinner.

The three Germans were really in charge. There was the senior officer, a cashier and another one who was in charge of food supplies. There was also a Greek interpreter, Raul Livadas. I was told later that that Raul saved English soldiers by helping them escape by boat from Greece. There was a lot of English espionage in Greece during the war. The Germans captured Raul. They also captured his wife. First they put him in another prison. The notorious Pavlo Mela Prison. This prison was for the prisoners that were to be tortured and eventually executed. The Germans, however needed him because he was fluent in German. His wife had a baby in Pavlo Mela, and they named him Pavlo. For every German killed, they would take ten to one hundred prisoners from







Pavlo Mella and execute them. The number of prisoners executed depended on their mood of that particular day. Because Raul was very valuable, the Germans took him out of Pavlo Mela and placed him into this prison work camp. Right now, Samuel, Haim and I were placed here.

One day, Raul approached me and asked me why in the world I told the Germans that I was Jewish. He told me that I should have never admitted that I was Jew. He explained that they did not have our names when they brought us here, but only the head count. He then informed me that he would assign me to the kitchen with the women. These were Greek women working for wages. I also asked if they could keep Samuel and Haim to work here, but he said no, because they were too old and they needed young men because the jobs that were required needed hard physical labor. He further informed me with the bad news that the Germans were about to send Samuel and Haim to Pavlo Mella and that I would stay there. Three days passed. I was sleeping in the office, until one day, Raul told me that I could not sleep there anymore. Raul was really a very kind man. (He later became ambassador to some country, after the war.) He said that I had to ask the women to take me home with them to sleep. He said that I could go to their house at night, and return in the morning. This was a very big thing, as these women were workers and I, a prisoner. The women were nice and he thought that this plan would work out very well. He said that he would work out the details with the Germans.

When I got to the prison, I had lice in my hair and everyone was scared to come near me. So when I approached them, they were not too eager to take me home with them,







although they did like me. But after a couple of days, the lice went away all by themselves without me using anything. I then approached them again, and they said although they would like to take me home, they were scared because if I escaped, they would get into big trouble with the Germans. I begged and begged and one of them, Mrs. Maria Ladopoulou, agreed to take me home with her at night. She was around 60 years old. She warned me that if I escaped, the Germans would kill her and her entire family, including her grandchildren. I promised that I would not escape. I told her that from now on, she was like my mother. So we went together to Raul, and told him. He warned her that it was a big responsibility and she agreed that she knew, and informed him that I had given my word not to escape.

Raul spoke to the Germans and arranged all the details with them. I began going home with Mrs. Maria. We would take food home with us everyday. This arrangement really was working out very well. I used to eat in prison before I left, and took my portion of the food home and gave it to her family. She lived with her children. One married daughter and two boys. There was another married daughter who lived separately. There were two rooms. Maria, the two boys and myself would sleep in one room, and the daughter and her husband in the other. One of the two sons was studying to be a priest. His name was Pandelis. The other son was deaf and dumb. His name was Pavlos. She also had a third son, but her aunt adopted him because she had no children of her own. His name was Mitchos. The daughters' names were Thespina Tsutikas. She lived with us. She was the youngest. The other daughter's name was Kiki Kalkopoulou. She had three children, two girls and one boy. She also had a stepdaughter from her husband,







Stefanos, who was a widower before she married him. They lived separately. Stefanos was a wealthy man. He owned a lighter factory. Mrs. Maria had to give every name of each member of her family to the Germans. If I escaped, they would go after them. Maria did not tell Pandelli that I was Jewish because as he was studying to be a priest, and she thought that he might not like Jews. So only the daughters knew that I was Jewish.

A few days later,, Raul informed me that they were taking Samuel and Haim to Pavlo Mella. He said the Germans were coming to take them and warned me not to come out at all. Not to speak to anyone, and to pretend that I did not know Samuel and Haim. He assured me that the German in charge would not say anything. The next day, I saw them from my window when they came to take them. I never saw them again. I remained there working in the kitchen. My job was washing pots and pans, peeling vegetable and many other kitchen duties. I also asked Raul for one more thing. I explained that being that I would be exiting and entering the prison every day, I needed some kind of identification papers. Otherwise, I would have problems. I felt that it was necessary for my ID papers to say that I worked there. The following day, Raul presented me with an identification saying that I, Anna Mavropoulou, my Greek name, worked for a German company and that I had permission to come and go. The truth was that no one had stopped me thus far, but I felt that I needed this for extra safe measure. I remained working in the kitchen. We were four women and four men. One of the men was Italian and a prisoner like myself. The others were workers who received wages for their work.







One day, Raul told me that I had to also clean the offices, in addition to my work in the kitchen. I therefore, began working in both places. When I would finish my chores in the kitchen, I would then go and clean the offices.

One day, as I was dusting the offices, I came across some very interesting papers. The Greek secretary, Aleka, who worked in the office, had forgotten to put these papers away. She had also not put away a seal. She left them on top of the desk. I noticed that the papers on the desk were the same kind of documents that were given to me as my identification. Immediately, I decided to steal three documents. I stamped each one with the seal, and when I went home that evening, I forged the signature that was on my ID. I did this by using tracing paper. My purpose for taking these papers was to give them to the Greek in order for them to be free. I also started doing something else. Everyday, walking back and forth between the kitchen and office, I would pass through the yard. I would fill up empty cans with food from the kitchen and would leave the cans hidden behind various places in the yard. As I would walk across the yard, I would whisper to the men that there was food hidden for whoever was hungry. I would leave three – five cans every day. My days were filled with all these activities. It gave me great pleasure to be able to free some men, and to feed a few that were hungry.

One my way to the prison with Mrs. Maria one evening, someone called out “Be careful that you do not get runned over by a Verietico (train from Veria) Train”. He screamed this out a couple of times. I soon figured out that someone from Veria must have recognized me. I could not acknowledge that I heard, nor could I speak to anyone, as the







Germans were right there, so I ignored him. Another day, I thought that I recognized two Greek boys that were my brother Jacko's friends. These were two twins that used to sell newspapers in Veria. So that evening, they spoke to me and asked if I was Jacko's sister. I noticed, however, that only one of the twins was there. The other boy was another friend of my brothers. We asked each other what we were doing there. They told me that the Germans had put one of the twins in prison. As they were identical twins, when their family would visit them, they would switch places, and would take turns staying in prison. They asked me if I needed anything. I thanked them and told them that I was okay, and that I did not need anything. A month later they were released.

A few weeks later, the German cashier, through Raul, informed me there would be a party that evening. He told me that they would need me to stay and help with the preparations and the cleanup. I asked where I would be sleeping that night, as I did not see any place for me. I was told that I would go home with Aleka, the Greek secretary, that evening. There was another secretary, Mariana, also Greek, and all of them were also invited. They were friends.

We began to set the tables with the dishes, glasses, etc. The German cashier had bad intentions for me. He asked that a place setting was to be placed for me, and that it should be next to him. Every man there had a girlfriend. Aleka and Mariana were the two other Germans' girlfriends. He had no girlfriend, and thus, I was supposed to be his date for that evening. There was another Greek woman there, Katina, who was helping set the tables who whispered to me that I was in for it, and that I would have a horrible







evening. The cashier's name was Hans. The sitting arrangement at the table was German style. One man, one woman. When they sang, they would all hold each other and move to the right and then to the left. As planned, I sat next to Hans. I did not smoke or drink. Hans was around 35 years old. The head German was there also, who I thought was handsome. In fact, I thought he looked like my father. Han looked mean and ugly.

Hans drank and smoked non stop. He kept giving me cigarettes and drinks, mainly beers. I was choking from the smoke. Hans began getting very drunk. As fast as he would give me the drinks, that is how fast I kept spilling them on the floor. This went on until the end of the party, which was over very late. Finally, when the party was over, I began to get ready so that I can go home with Aleka as planned. I noticed, however, that Aleka was avoiding me. I began following her, but she managed to escape me and left. Hans had instructed her to leave me there with him. Mariana came over then, and confirmed that Aleka had already left, and that I was to sleep there. I started to cry, and Katina informed me again that Aleka had left, and that I was to sleep with Hans. I was so scared and was crying so hard. Mariana repeated that I had no choice, and that I better stop crying. In the meantime, she began bringing the pillows and covers and began making up the sofa. I began looking around frantically trying to figure out how I was going to escape.

I went out in the yard, and I was looking around. I spotted one of the Greek guards, and I begged him to let me hide behind him in the guard house. I asked him to please stand in front of a small covered guardhouse so it would be easy for me to hide inside, while he







was guarding outside with his gun. At first, he said he could not do it, as it was very dangerous because he also knew the plans that Hans had for me. But I begged him so much, he finally said Okay. I was weeping and trembling. He was so scared also, because he knew that they would start searching for me, and this could mean his life, but he finally agreed because he felt sorry for me because he knew what would be in store for me. After the guard agreed, I went inside the guardhouse. At the same time, a telephone call came in from the German in charge. He had found out from Aleka, his girlfriend, the plans that Hans had for me. He, therefore, called Hans and asked him to report to him immediately because he was holding a meeting with the whole staff. At his superior's command, Hans had to leave immediately. That evening was a wonderful evening. We all celebrated, as there were no German guards around. Everyone kept saying over and over, what a lucky girl I was to have escaped such a terrible fate.

This was now 1944. One day, one of the women working in the prison, asked me if I wanted to go to a card reader, to listen to our fortunes. I asked Mrs. Maria's permission to go right after work, before going to her house that evening. Mrs. Maria said that it was okay with her. By now, three months had passed since I had begun staying in her house, and she trusted me 100%. When I sat in front of the card reader, she asked me to open the cards in three places. I followed her instructions, but she informed me that I did not open them correctly because what she saw was not possible. So I opened them again and then, again. I asked her to tell me what she saw. She said that first of all, she saw that I was a prisoner, which she said could not be true because I was standing there in front of her as a free person. The second thing she saw was that I had escaped many very







unfortunate and difficult situations. She further read in the cards that there was a very bad man that wanted to harm me. She saw that I escaped, and that I celebrated. She continued to tell me that I would meet a person I knew who would bring me news about my family, but that it would be bad news.

A couple of days after the incident with the card reader, Thespina, Mrs. Maria's daughter, and I were going to seamstress. We noticed a man following us. He was wearing a very old coat and a cap. He began running after us. We began we ran, he ran faster after us. As he is running, he began yelling to me. "Aren't you from Veria?" I told Thespina that we had to stop and talk to this man. It would be worse if we didn't because he would just keep following us home. She agreed. He really seemed to know me. With our heads down, and very, very scared, we approached him. He asked me again if I was from Veria. I replied yes, I was. I took a good look at him, and recognized him. It was Joseph Taboh, our Jewish neighbor. I called him by his name. We began speaking to each other. I explained that I was working at the German prison. I asked Mrs. Thespina if he could come home with us, so that we could really talk. She said it was okay. When we got to the house, he explained that he was hiding in the mountains with my sister Ida. He informed me that Ida had given birth to a baby girl. She and her in-laws were hiding in the mountains of Nausea, but that Ida's husband was captured together with his brother and taken to Pavlo Mela Prison. This is where they had taken Samuel and Haim. I then asked him what he was doing here, and he explained that his sister-in-law could not take living in the mountains any longer, and that he came to Thessaloniki to see if he could find a house to hide because she would go mad up there.







Thespina and I warned Joseph that he was committing suicide. He said that the Germans were now capturing many Jews in hiding, as with Ida's husband and his brother, and thus life in the mountains was also very dangerous. The next day, I approached Raul at the prison and pleaded with him to find out what had happened to Samuel and Haim. I also informed Raul that Samuel had hidden US\$100 in a blanket and if he found the blanket he could keep the Lires. I really wanted to know what had happened to my father-in-law. When Raul heard about the dollars. He agreed to go and check out the situation. As promised, Raul went. He came back and informed me that Ida's husband had been killed that same day. He also informed me that Samuel and Haim were killed. He never mentioned the blankets or the dollars. This new broke my heard. I really learned to love and respect Samuel like a father. He was such an intelligent man with so much foresight. And poor Haim. He had helped us so much. Anyway, it was amazing how the the card reader's predictions had come true.

I kept giving away the documents with the fake signatures and freed more people. I was determined to do my share in this war whichever way I could find. I went back to the office to get more documents, but I could not find anymore. I only got a chance to save only five Greek men. I still had one more document. I had selected the people to whom I had given the documents at random. They would thank me and just walk out of the prison as free men.







A few weeks later, we heard the Germans banging and screaming in the middle of the night outside Mrs. Maria's house. The Germans were looking for someone. No one was allowed to go out at night. Someone had gone out, and the Germans were beating him to death. He was screaming HELP! HELP! For years I remembered the agonizing screams of that human being crying out for help. We went to the windows to see, but the Germans would point their flashlights to our windows and whoever they saw looking, they would go and take them as well. We, therefore, hid quickly, before the flashlights caught us. He was being tortured because he was out passed the curfew that the Germans had imposed on the city.

Eight months passed since I had entered this prison, and the war was still going on. By now, I would go and sleep over KIKI's house, with Mrs. Maria's permission, of course. A month later, the senior Greek person at the prison, Axileas Tsetouras, came over to speak with me. He informed me that the Germans were losing the war. I felt so happy. That was the good news. The bad news, he informed, was that the Germans were planning to take me with them, wherever they were going. They said that I was a very good worker and would be very useful to them. He advised me that I should prepare to escape. He was a very kind person, and I might add, very good looking. I think that I had a crush on him. He was around 28-30 years old, tall, blond and just very handsome. (I met him after the war was over. He was working as a policeman for immigration. He was still single.) He advised me very strongly that I should prepare to escape, or I would be leaving with the Germans.







I was petrified. How can I escape? Where would I go to hide? If I did run away, I would really hurt Mrs. Maria's entire family. If I stayed, the Germans would take me with them, use me, abuse me, and eventually kill me. I was in a very difficult situation. I was thinking and trying to come up with the best solution. I decided to go and speak to Axileas and ask him to give me fake documents. He thought about it, and although it was very dangerous for him to do this, he agreed. He took my picture, and issued fake identification papers with the name, Anna Mavropoulou. The ID said that I was from a village, and was now living in Thessaloniki. That day, I walked out of the prison, as usual, and went to Kiki's house, Mrs. Maria's daughter. I did not say anything to Mrs. Maria. My plan was to ask Kiki to let me stay at her house. I had discussed this plan with Axileas. He did tell me that if Kiki would not agree to let me stay at her house, I could stay at his house. Although I like him, I really did not want to stay with him. After all, I did not know him that well, he was a single man and I was a married woman. Anyway, he agreed with my plan, and even promised to bring me food everyday, so that I would not be a burden to Kiki. That was the plan.

I had been in prison now nine months, and they mostly trusted me. This was now November. I had to put the plan into action. I went to the head German, and asked him to allow me to go the seamstress the following day to measure for a coat. The weather was getting very chilly. He agreed to let me go, to the seamstress but asked me not to take too long. He said that there were too many chores to do. He also said that I could go only after I finished all my work. The next day, I was ready. Mrs. Maria and I arrived at the prison in morning as usual. I told her that I had permission to leave and go to the







seamstress. As I was leaving, I handed to a prisoner the last forged document that I had so that another prisoner could free himself. As planned, I went directly to Kiki's house. When I got there, I told Kiki everything. She began to scream and cry. She was very worried about her mother. She was furious with me because she said for sure, her mother would be killed. She ordered me to go back to the prison immediately before anyone found out. At the same time, she felt very bad for me. She, therefore, said before we decided anything; we should discuss this with her husband, Stefano. Stefano was at work, so she sent one of her children to ask him to come home right away. As soon as Stefano heard the story, he told Kiki that they had to help me. He said that they could not allow me to go back to the prison. He felt that the Germans would kill me. Kiki made the argument that if I stayed, the Germans would kill the whole family. Stefano's argument was that the war was almost over, and that he was sure that they would not kill the family at this time. Kiki, however, was still crying and insisting that she was scared for her family. She really was very frightened, and I did not blame her. I could not stand there and see her suffer so much.

All three of us were talking at the same time, and trying to come up with a solution. I was thinking and thinking how can all of us be safe? I thought hard and made the following suggestion. I suggested a workable solution. I suggested that we should send Kiki's younger daughter, Toula, to the prison to see how Maria was doing. This was not unusual. Toula went to visit her grandmother often at the prison. Toula would see what was going on. If she came back with a report that Mrs. Maria was being questioned, or beaten, or anything bad was happening to her, I would return to the prison immediately. I







would simply apologize and tell them that I was delayed at the seamstress. Kiki listened and calmed down. She thought that it was a good idea. We all agreed and sent Toula over to the prison.

An hour later Toula returned from the prison. She told us that her grandmother was well. She was not hurt in any way. However, Mrs. Maria was crying and saying that I was a bad girl, and most ungrateful, because I was not back yet, as I had promised, and that I did not care if she got into trouble. Mrs. Maria did tell Toula that she was questioned by the German regarding my whereabouts, but they did not beat her. Mrs. Maria said that the Germans were blaming the prisoner that I had given the last document to, to escape, and that they assumed that he took me with him. Mrs. Maria was relieved that I had run away with that prisoner, thus they would not blame her and kill her family. Toula was 14 years old. We had instructed her not to tell Mrs. Maria that I was at Kiki's house. When Toula finished telling us everything, Kiki was very relieved. She kissed me and began acting wonderful to me again and said that I could stay at her house as long as I wanted. I spend two weeks in Kiki's house. By then, the Germans had lost the war, and left Thessaloniki. This was November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1944. The Andartes came running down from the mountains. Everyone was in the streets cheering. I ran to the prison and explained everything to Mrs. Maria. We both cried. She apologized to me for thinking the worst of me and speaking so badly about me.

The news that the Germans left Greece spread fast. The second Alberto heard, he was the first person hiding in the mountains to come to Thessaloniki to look for me. He was







walking around all over the place looking for me. He was asking everyone regarding my whereabouts as well for his father and uncle. He was sitting at a café, by himself, depressed not knowing if anyone of us was still alive. He knew that we were captured, but did not know if we had survived. As he was sitting there, someone came over to him and asked him why he was so sad. THE WAR IS OVER! Everyone is celebrating! Alberto said that he was depressed because he did not know if his wife, father and uncle were alive. He said he had been looking everywhere, no one knew anything, and that he did not know where else to go and where to look. Someone sitting there overheard the conversation, and mentioned that he knew about a Jewish girl that was in prison. He told him that he did not know whether or not she was his wife, but he can start looking there.

Alberto ran to the prison and asked for me. He was asked to describe me, and also they asked him what his relationship to me was. Once he explained and he was my husband, and the story checked out, they informed him where I was staying. He began running on the main road to the house, Apostolou Pavlou, #128, to Mrs. Maria's house. He arrived so out of breath. He knocked at the door, and Mrs. Maria answered. He asked for me, she confirmed him that I was staying there, and that I had just left to go back to the prison to bring back food. He screamed that he had just come back from there. Mrs. Maria, asked him to wait for her, and that they would go together. She explained that I sometimes took the back road to the prison, and the road is complicated. He impatiently said okay, and both of them started walking to the prison. In the meantime, when I arrived at the prison, everyone informed me that my husband came to look for me. I did not know what to say, so I stupidly said "what husband?" All the men began making fun and laughing and







asked me how many husbands did I have. I went straight to the kitchen, and asked the Italian man that cooked to hurry up and give me the food. I took the food and left. On the way back to Mrs. Maria's house, I saw her and my husband walking towards me. It was such a feeling. I was happy, scared and disoriented at the same time. We hugged and kissed and went back to Mrs. Maria's house. Alberto and I stayed there two nights. It took us one week to get back to Veria, as all the bridges were destroyed and the streets were closed. When we arrived, I found my sister Ida. She had lost her husband and was staying with her baby at her in-laws house. She was the only one from my family that survived. The rest of the family had gone to the camps. Our whole family had perished. It was the saddest moment of our life. Our whole world had changed. We had changed. When I left my home I was a little girl still wearing bobby socks. I left a girl of fifteen and a half, and came back a woman of seventeen.

Ida, Alberto, Joyia and I went to my parents house and found strangers living there. We asked them to vacate the house, but they refused. Their response was that it was too bad that the Germans did not put us in the ovens like the rest of the Jews. However, with the help of the court system, they moved out three months later and Alberto, Joyia and I moved in. My sister Ida with her baby daughter, continued to live with her in-laws. We found the house empty. All the furniture and clothes were gone. Alberto went to his father's store to start the business all over again. Other people were there as well, and again we experienced resistance. Again we went to court, and six months later they moved out of the store.







During this period, we faced many other difficult situations. At this time in Greece, there was constant fighting between the communists and the government. There was a civil war going on. We had a Jewish worker, Isaac Ovadia, in the store, who was a captain of a group of Andartes in the mountains, on the Andartes/Communist side during the war. The government was after him. Isaac had nowhere to go, and we let him stay with us. The police would come to our store and tell us that we should fire Isaac. We felt sorry for him, and really did not believe that he was a communist. We felt that he was just another Jewish person hiding in the mountains. One evening, six months later, in the middle of the night, the police came to our home and began banging on the door. We opened the door, they barged in, and grabbed Isaac, took him to the basement and began to beat him unmercifully. We ran down, and opened the light. When they saw us, they immediately dragged him outside, and they continued beating him. Poor Isaac, he was screaming from pain. He was a strong young man. I do not know how, but he managed to run away from them back into our house. We immediately shut and locked the door. The police continued to come to our home and harass us. They threatened to burn our house, and kill us if we did not give him up. We began to really feel uncomfortable, and very frightened. This lasted until 1946.

We could not take this any longer. We did not feel safe living in Veria any longer. We decided to sell the store and the house, and moved to Thessaloniki. Isaac ran away.

Alberto found a job in a store selling the same products as he was used to. We settled in Thessaloniki and tried to build a new life. On May 5th, 1946 my first daughter, Julie was born. Right before I gave birth, Isaac came back just to see me. He wanted to see my







daughter. They were after him thought, and he could not stay. He left for Serbia. We never saw him again. Life was very difficult. Alberto was not used to working for anyone else. We had very little money. The Jewish community was now very small in Thessaloniki. At this time, with the help of the Displaced Persons Act, the first wave of immigration began. Many were going to Israel and to the United States. The reasons were obvious. There was extreme psychological and economical hardship. We decided that this would be a good opportunity for us also. We filled our papers, went through all the steps necessary, however, the quota was filled up by then. This was 1951. On May 11<sup>th</sup>, 1954, my second daughter, Lena was born. The next opportunity to go to the United States came in 1956. We went through the process again, and on October 25<sup>th</sup>, 1956, Alberto, Joyia, Julie, Lena and I, arrived in Philadelphia. This was the last wave of immigration. Six months later we moved to San Francisco, and in 1960 we moved to New York, which is where we stayed. Leaving Greece was not such an easy decision. But we had to think of our daughters. What kind of a future would they have in Greece?

After the war, Mrs. Maria and her entire family continued to live in Thessaloniki. We never stopped being good friends. After we moved to the United States, we continued our friendship by correspondence. In 1971, we made our first trip back to Greece. It was very emotional when we visited Mrs. Maria and her family. Mrs. Maria passed away in 1975. Her daughter Thespina died in 1976. The close friendship with her daughter Kiki continued until she passed away in 1995. My friend Olga, moved from Veria and has been living in Thessaloniki since a few years after the war. We remain good friends, we correspond, and I visit her when I go to Greece. In 1947, my sister Ida remarried Isaac







Eliau, a very wealthy man. Isaac had lost his wife and daughter in the concentration camps. Isaac and Ida had four children together. There was Yiona from Ida's first marriage, and then Rachel, Lena, Gilda and Jacko. Isaac died in Greece in 1993. Today Ida lives in Israel and so does Yiona and Gilda. Yiona has four children and two grandchildren. Gilda has three children. Rachel, Lena and Jacko live in Greece. Each one has two children.

How did we feel after the war? Our hearts were broken. We lost our loved ones, we lost our home, we left the country that we knew. We did however sing again, we danced again, and all the while we felt pain and joy at the same time. Until Alberto died in 1990, he was dancing and singing. He played his mandolin and bouzouki at home, at other peoples' home, in the park, on the beach, or wherever and as often as he could. He danced until literally until the day before he got his stroke, which he died from seven days later. We had parties after the war in Greece also. We would get together with the Jews that came back from the camps and from hiding like us and we sang old songs. Joyia would dance, I would dance and sing duets with Alberto. That is what life is. To take that moment of pleasure and expand it for as long as you can, and give it all you got. Feel it and hold it as a memory.

To this day, I remember my childhood so vividly. I can see my mother, I can still feel her touch when she placed the string of pearls around my neck, I can see my brothers and sisters, and I can also see my brother Ruben when he left us that night to go back to our family. Oh, if only he had stayed with us. He would still be alive today. To this day, I







feel that very painful moment when I went back to my house, only to find strangers living there. The survivors came back to their home. Our homes were taken over, our businesses were looted and our synagogues were destroyed. There was no welcome for us. There was no “glad to see you. We are glad that you came back safe.” In fact, some said “too bad you were not burned in the ovens.” The Germans tried to take our dignity, our honor, our humanity, our lives, and we still came back and danced, and sang. Our hearts were full of aching pain, missing our families. They were killed for no reason. They were killed for nothing. They were killed for being a certain religion.

It is something that we will never comprehend. Why? What did we do? What did the Jewish people in the small city of Veria, Greece ever do to the Germans? I know that a lot of people have tried to answer this question. A lot of people that are much smarter than I am..

This is my story. We built our lives all over again. We build it on the ruins of our life before the war. It took a lot of strength. But on the other hand, what else can a human being do? There is no other alternative. We learned to be happy again. And this time, we felt our music and our joy in our hearts even deeper than before. We had to. We had to, not only for ourselves, but more important, for our children. Our spirit was crushed so many times, but it came back. In a way, we are able to feel more now. We feel deeper joy, and we feel deeper pain for other people, and we also feel desperation in a higher level. And you know, feeling is good. It is very good.











